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Submission by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran

in relation to the Symposium for Land-locked and Transit Developing Countries

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

The attached text was submitted to the UNCTAD secretariat by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 22 June 1995 and is circulated at their request, in the form and language in which it was received.

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In the name of ALLAH, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The Islamic Republic of Iran actively participated and contributed to the development of reliable and efficient intraregional and interregional land transport linkages and services in the region in a true spirit of regional cooperation. We have committed ourselves to strengthening regional cooperation through improved transport infrastructure development.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has already begun to build a multibillion-dollar rail and road network to link the Persian Gulf with former Soviet republics which extends to China. It include also the creation of new trade routes linking the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. With the completion of Iran's project for new transportation links to Central Asia, its facilities will offer a closer alternative.

By the opening of the 700 km. Bafq-Bandar Abbas railway track, currently, goods from Iran's northern neighbors could reach Bandar Abbas which is becoming one of the main centers of trade on the Persian Gulf and back by rail via the port of Bandar Turkemen in the Caspian Sea. This railway track is 1,940 km long. Also trains from Iran's northwestern neighbors and Turkey now have access to Bandar-Abbas via the Razi station. This railway track is 2,465 km long. The Bandar Abbas Port has 4,900 meters of jetties and is connected to 80 leading ports around the globe. As rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General report to the 49th session of General Assembly, contained in document A/49/277 Para, 34, a route south to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas has the great advantage of a short distance required to reach a major seaport. Now, with the completion of Bafq-Bandar Abbas railway track, this route is readily available.

The construction of Mashhad-Sarakhs railway from the eastern Iranian city of Mashhad to Sarakhs on the Turkmenistan border, will link the Islamic Republic of Iran with the railway network of the central Asian Countries as well as China's. This project is planned to be in eqrly 1996. The completion of Mashhad-Sarakhs railway track, will link not only directly Turkmenistan but also the caucasus and Central Asian Republics and Europe to the Persian Gulf through Iran's nationwide railway.

Due to the importance of this project to the expansion of trade and promotion of economic development at the sub-regional and

regional levels, Bafq-Bandar Abbas track was inaugurated by president Hashemi Rafsanjani. The participation of presidents of Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Armenia, the Prime Minister of Georgia and officials from other countries including Turkey and the Persian Gulf states in the ceremony indicated the importance of the project for the region. Addressing the guests at the ceremony, President Rafsanjani said, "the new railway link is available to all the newly independent republics of the Former Soviet Union as a conduit for trade".

In his congratulatory message on the occasion of the official inauguration of the Bafq-Bandar Abbas railway route on 18 March 1995, the ESCAP pointed out that " having the railway access to the Port of Bandar-Abbas secured, we are looking forward to early completion of the other missing rail link between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan which would provide not only an important uninterrupted Trans-Asian railway route from Central Asia to the Port of Bandar Abbas but also the " New Silk Railway " from China through Central Asia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey to Europe". The message makes the remark that the regional importance of this new railway route stems also from the fact that it bring about the possibility of development of an efficient rail- - sea transport route between Europe and Asia and the Pacific regions.

Necessary measures are also taken for the construction of railway rout from Iran's western province of Azerbaijan to the border of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In line with agreements signed at the ECO summit in Islamabad, calling for the improvement of transportation links between the member countries, Iranian railway network would be soon expanded in the eastern part of the country so that Pakistan could also share it.

With the expansion of its railways, the Islamic Republic of Iran has strengthened its claim as the most accessible trade route between its northern neighbors and the booming Far East markets through the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

With regard to the movement of goods, the ESCAP in its last annual session stressed, as contained in Para 8 of the document E/ESCAP/L.129 (No. 6), that unfettered transit of goods should be encouraged and, in this context, it noted the recent agreement between India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan for safe transit through the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Also, as contained in document E/ESCAP/L.129 (No.9), the Commission reiterated its strong support for the integrated Asian land transport infrastructure development (ALTID) project. In this respect the Commission stressed, among others, the particular importance of the operationalization of the northern routes of the Trans-Asian Railway linking north-east Asia with Europe via the Islamic Republic of Iran with land transport connections to

seaports in the south and the Kerman-Zahedan railway section in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Furthermore, appreciating the inauguration of the railway route Bafq-Bandar Abbas, the Commission recognized that with the completion in 1996 of the only link currently missing between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan, it would make possible a new "silk rail route" linking China and Europe via the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region.

Regarding the implementation of the ALTID project, the Commission noted the activities and the vital role of ECO in this respect.

The use of the routes is not limited to regional states. Australia has already transported food-processing equipment to Turkmenistan via Iran's ports and roads.

In addition to the rapid expansion of Iran's railway network as an important mean and way for the expansion of trade at the sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels, the existing roads network of Iran are serving considerably the land transportation among countries in the region. In this respect, several projects are now planned, constructed or are under construction, a good example of which is the desert highway project through Semnan which reduces by 500 km the distance between northern and southern Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is actively involved in the implementation of ESCAP resolution 48/11, and in this regard, we were pleased to host in Tehran in November 1994 the ESCAP seminar for ECO countries on implications of the accession to the land transport facilitation conventions. The Islamic Republic of Iran is considering to accede to some major conventions contained in that resolution.

With regard to multimodal transport, a country-level multimodal transport workshop was held in Tehran in May 1994, which provided some recommendations to further implement the multimodal transport systems in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those recommendations have been adopted by the various Government agencies concerned.

Despite the financial constraints, the Islamic Republic of Iran allocated a huge amount of resources for the development and strengthening the existing and new railway routs and roads to serve the needs of both national and of land-locked countries in the region. In order for the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand its efforts in this regard, the donor community and multilateral and international financial institutions should provide support both financially and technically.